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## ERIE COUNTY COMPTROLLER

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### **ERIE COUNTY TAXPAYERS PAY A BIG PRICE FOR STUDENTS TO ATTEND COMMUNITY COLLEGES ELSEWHERE**

*Almost \$7.7 million charged to taxpayers, when students pick college other than  
ECC*

**(ERIE COUNTY, NY)** – Erie County Comptroller Stefan Mychajliw says Erie County taxpayers continue to pay big bucks to other counties for educating their students at community colleges outside of Erie County.

In 2020, the taxpayers of Erie County paid a total of \$7,672,144.99 to other New York State counties for the community college education of Erie County residents who choose to attend a community college other than ECC.

The so-called “chargeback fees” are fees imposed on Erie County when an Erie County resident enrolls in a community college outside of the county. That cost or charge to Erie County is then passed on to the municipality where the student resides. New York State created the chargeback system decades ago.

“Taxpayers are already funding a portion of ECC. Then they’re paying for the right of an Erie County student to attend a community college outside of Erie County. They’re paying twice,” said Comptroller Stefan Mychajliw.

Chargeback fees have been on the rise consistently for the past several years:

- 2015: \$6,864,202.01
- 2016: \$6,928,238.39
- 2017: \$6,928,178.04
- 2018: \$7,124,894.84
- 2019: \$7,381,087.39
- 2020: \$7,672,144.99

The increase in chargeback fees assessed to local towns in the past year is the largest in recent years, up \$291,057.60 from 2019 to 2020, reflecting the continuation of a troubling trend.

“We continue to pay more in these fees every single year. Erie County politicians, as well as the college need to be asking where they are failing the taxpayers they are supposed to be serving. There are enrollment challenges, to be sure. But what are all the contributing factors? Does the school need to be taking a closer look at curriculum? Cost? Towns cannot continue to absorb these rising fees. The school, the state, and elected representatives need to look at the root causes of why,” said Comptroller Mychajliw.

Since 2015 Erie County taxpayers have paid a total of \$42,898,745.66 in chargeback fees for students who live in Erie County to attend at least 27 other community colleges.

“Clearly the status quo isn’t working. Legislators need to offer up comprehensive plans on how to most effectively spend taxpayer dollars on the school, and college leaders need to develop solid strategies to turn the tide,” said Comptroller Mychajliw. “We cannot continue subsidizing other community colleges when there are significant challenges to operating our own successfully.”

The Town of Amherst and the City of Buffalo are home to two of the three SUNY Erie Campuses. Amherst paid \$1,358,304.19 in chargeback fees in 2020. The city of Buffalo paid \$957,843.64 to other counties for the community college education of city residents who choose to attend a community college other than ECC. The third campus is located in Orchard Park, where that towns’ taxpayers paid \$191,584.65 in 2020 for its students to attend community college elsewhere.

The other towns hardest hit by the chargeback fees include; Cheektowaga, \$912,106.58, Grand Island, \$638,785.40, Hamburg, \$354,357.43, and the town of Tonawanda, \$980,029.16.

“Those are huge expenses being put on the backs of local towns across Erie County. Those costs have a big impact on the people who live in these communities. It’s hard enough to make ends meet with the rising cost of gasoline and groceries. For taxpayers to have to shell out millions more simply for the ‘privilege’ of attending a community college outside of Erie County isn’t fair and it isn’t right,” concluded Comptroller Mychajliw.